

Message: Mr. President,

I am writing in regards to the recent drone strike that killed 13 people on their way to a wedding in Yemen.

I am a pastor in a rural area of Iowa. This week, we looked back at the life of Nelson Mandela. Did you know that Mandela went to prison in large part because the CIA spied on him and gave information about his activities to the white South African government? That man that you just went to honor was a victim of the same security apparatus that you yourself abuse. He was on a terrorist watch list until 2008. 2008!

This past Sunday, I reminded my church that there is violence in institutions. There is violence in spying. There is violence in watch lists. There is violence in economic exploitation. We should never forget the "violence of institutions; indifference and inaction and slow decay. This is the violence that afflicts the poor, that poisons relations between men because their skin has different colors. This is the slow destruction of the child by hunger, and schools without books and homes without heat in winter." (Robert Kennedy)

It is both stupid and dishonest to assume that others are violent against us for no reason. It is false to claim that al-Qaeda attempts to do us harm without provocation. All I want to do right now is point to this drone strike in Yemen and scream, "This! This is why they hate us. I would hate us too."

Do you see how the cycle of violence can never end?

I bet you say that violence against people living in rural Yemen (when did we declare war in Yemen again?) can end when they renounce violence. Well, let me paraphrase Mr. Mandela for you, "Let Obama show that he is different to Bush, Clinton, Reagan, and Nixon. Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle the the drone and black ops programs that kill innocents. Let him free all those who were imprisoned without charge." Mandela charged that the state had to renounce violence before he would. I suspect that the people in Yemen feel the same way. You claim to admire Mr. Mandela - listen to his words to you!

Through my tax dollars, you have once again turned me into a murderer. Please, Mr. President, you are doing more harm than good with this program. You are turning good people against us. Please, renounce violence.

For the sake of your soul, of mine, of all those in Yemen, and of those in Afghanistan - renounce violence and seek a lasting peace for the whole world.

Peace,  
The Rev. Brian Camara